

VZCZCXRO9534
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #3910/01 1861258
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051258Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7044
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKDAI/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU
RUEHAK/TSR ANKARA TU
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003910

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2026

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: ASSAILANT STABS CATHOLIC PRIEST; WOUNDS
SUPERFICIAL

REF: ANKARA 522

Classified by Polcouns Janice Weiner; reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d).

11. (U) Summary: An assailant stabbed a Catholic priest in the Black Sea port city of Samsun July 2; the priest, a Frenchman, was treated and released the next day. The Samsun Governor told reporters the assailant had been diagnosed as schizophrenic. The attacker reportedly accused the priest of conducting missionary work. Fear of missionaries appears to be on the rise in Turkey; after a 16-year-old boy murdered a Catholic priest in Trabzon in February, there were claims that the victim was a missionary. End Summary.

Attacker "Schizophrenic"

12. (U) A 47-year-old man stabbed Catholic Priest Pierre Brunissen in the hip in the Black Sea port city of Samsun. The priest, a 74-year-old Frenchman, was treated at a local hospital and released July 3. Samsun Governor Guzeloglu told reporters that the assailant, Atilla Nuran, turned himself in to police shortly after the incident.

13. (U) The Turkish press widely reported that Nuran is mentally ill. According to several reports, he was arrested in 1983 for stabbing and killing his aunt after she poured tea on him. Guzeloglu said Nuran was diagnosed as schizophrenic in January 2006. Nuran also reportedly had accused Brunissen before the attack of conducting missionary work, i.e., trying to convert Turkish Muslims. Nuran was an acquaintance of Brunissen, and some press reports asserted that the attack was related to money Nuran owed to the priest.

Victim Eager to Return to Work

14. (U) Papal Nuncio Antonio Lucibello told us Brunissen downplayed the attack in conversations with Catholic clergy at the hospital, assuring his colleagues that he is eager to return to his duties. A contact at the French Embassy told us the French Consul left for Samsun July 3 to meet with

Brunissen and local officials. Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Vatican's Department for Christian Unity, on July 4 responded to reporters' questions about the attack by stating that Turkey lacks true religious freedom and arguing that Turkey is not ready for integration with Europe.

¶5. (U) The attack came five months after a 16-year-old shot and killed Catholic Priest Andrea Santoro in Trabzon, another Black Sea port east of Samsun (reftel). Some reports of the Trabzon shooting alleged that Santoro, an Italian, was performing missionary work.

Anti-Missionary Sentiment

¶6. (C) Lucibello said anti-missionary sentiment appears to be on the rise in Turkey. There is no law against proselytizing in Turkey, but those who seek to convert Turkish Muslims, or who are believed to be doing so, face threats. Lucibello said he often explains to GOT officials that Catholic clergy openly express their beliefs, but do not proselytize. Moreover, he adds, Turkey, which is officially 99 percent Muslim, has no reason to fear the influence of the small number of Christians residing in the country. Nevertheless, many Turks assume that all Christians are engaged in proselytizing, and some view them as a threat.

¶7. (C) Luigi Padovese, Bishop of Anatolia, told Consulate Adana during a meeting in Iskenderun that he is concerned about the risk faced by Catholic clergy in Turkey. He said there have been a number of attacks and threats against Catholic priests since the Trabzon shooting; on Easter day,

ANKARA 00003910 002 OF 002

for example, an assailant threw a Molotov cocktail at a Catholic priest in Izmir (the bomb failed to explode), and six weeks ago a group of motorcyclists tried to run Padovese down as he walked on an Iskenderun beach.

Comment: Anti-Missionary Tensions

¶8. (C) Both this stabbing incident and the Trabzon shooting took place in a Black Sea region known for an aggressive strain of Turkish nationalism. Turkey's EU accession process, while supported by more than half the population, is viewed by some as an attack on Turkish culture and identity. In this context, Christians in Turkey are seen as missionaries bent on converting the population. Even secular nationalists not known to be practicing Muslims -- such as Rahsan Ecevit, wife of former PM and Democratic Left Party leader Bulent Ecevit -- have issued hysterical warnings about the threat missionaries pose to Turkish Islam. The GOT has also issued alarmist statements characterizing missionaries as a threat, though not in recent months. It may be true that Brunissen's assailant is mentally ill, but it is no coincidence that his victim is a priest.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON